# TWINKLY EYES AT VALLEY FARM

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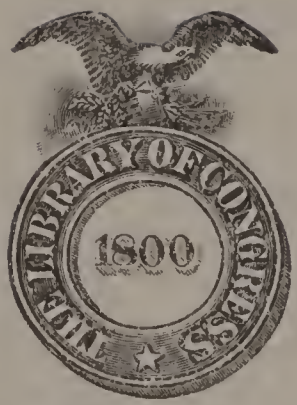
ALLEN CHAFFEE

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Twinkly Eyes encounters Bobby Lynx

# TWINKLY EYES AT VALLEY FARM

## The Adventures of a Little Black Bear

BY

ALLEN CHAFFEE

Author of "The Adventures of Fleet Foot and her Fawns," "Trail and Tree Top," "The Travels of Honk-a-Tonk," "The Adventures of Twinkly Eyes, the Little Black Bear," "Twinkly Eyes and the Lone Lake Folk," and "Lost River, the Adventures of Two Boys in the Big Woods"

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# PREFACE

When Twinkly Eyes, the yearling cub, visits the sugar camp once too often, he finds himself in a trap, and the Boy from the Valley Farm takes him home. The little black rascal manages, however, to pass the time by getting into 57 varieties of trouble, from digging up the seed potatoes to stealing a hot pie from the window sill. But of course he is never really happy till he wins back his freedom.

Not that the little bear is the only old friend we meet. There is Unk Wunk the porcupine, and Bobby Lynx, and Frisky Fox, and other Lone Lake folk, to say nothing of Mother Black Bear and the wee new cubs, and the Traveling Showman's dancing bear, and Chet-woof, the cross old bear of the neighboring range,—yes, and even a herd of dinosaurs,—that played leading parts when Twinkly had a nightmare.

The tale was written partly to amuse, and partly to interpret the dumb world to the vocal, and picture the unfolding minds of these little brothers of the wild, with their plant lore, their weather wisdom, and their place in the scheme of things.

But it is the author's hope that,—when you have seen how all but human is the little black bear, how like a primitive backwoods boy in fur, mischievous, enterprising, courageous, affectionate, industrious in finding a living, intelligent in reasoning out the meaning of all he sees about him, how valuable, as well, to forestry (catching more mice and other woodland pests than a man could, working on a salary),—shall we not agree that our Ursus Americanus deserves a better fate than that of being hunted like a criminal? (Would that the staunch spirit imprisoned within his furry chest could speak for itself—just once!)

He deserves, at the very least, a closed season, when for a few months his life is not in constant peril. Our black bear of the East,—the cinnamon bear of the Sierras,—

is never dangerous to man, save of course when man has first tried to murder him. He will, it is true, defend his life or that of his cubs. (And when wounded by one man, he will sometimes blame the next comer for his attempted assassination.)—But where he is protected all the year around, as he is in the National Parks, this could never happen. On the other hand, it is one of the rarest delights of visitors to the Yellowstone, Yosemite and such places to be able to watch these dusky forest folk without hostility on either side, and even sometimes to play with them.

Certainly the sportsman will find it more fun to hunt them with a kodak than with trap and gun. And no child who has ever had his hand licked by a fat, little, puppy-like bear ever will want to hurt him.

ALLEN CHAFFEE.

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# TWINKLY EYES AT VALLEY FARM

## CHAPTER I

### BIG BEARS AND LITTLE BEARS

TWINKLY EYES, the little black bear, had been exploring on the far side of Lone Lake.

Here, where the forest fire had swept seventeen years before, was now a tangle of wild blackberry vines, with blueberries, high-bush and low-bush, covering the slopes in patches of ripening purple.

By reason of their southern slant, one hillside had ripened earlier than the rest. Twinkly was just settling down in the midst of a clump of bushes where he could paw in great, juicy mouthfuls, when a deep rumbling growl sounded close behind him. He swung about, startled and ready to defend

himself from the unseen menace. It was Chetwoof, the big bear of the neighboring range, who had approached noiselessly on his huge padded feet.

"Sir, you are in my berry patch!" he growled, rising to his full height, with paw upraised ready to punish the small intruder.

Now, Twinkly Eyes, the yearling, was no coward, but he had good common sense, and one look at the big bear towering so far above him was more than enough. He retreated like any other small boy caught pilfering a neighbor's garden. Only, "I didn't know it was yours," he apologized as he ran.

Had it been a full grown bear who had dared invade the other's territory, he would have met with a different reception. But a big bear will of course not fight a cub,—though neither will he allow any cubs but his own on his range. (But all this is understood in bear-dom. Twinkly Eyes had told the truth when he said he didn't know it was Chetwoof's.)

The late spring sunshine lay warm in the

Bluff and Boxer began to fight

open places, and the air was musical with the sunset songs of birds. Krek the pheasant cock was drumming on a hollow log, in his desire to call the world's attention to his handsome plumage. Down on Lone Lake the little black ducks were puddling sociably, otters were diving in the trout pools for their suppers, and Baldy the eagle was trying to make the fish hawk drop his catch.

He could see Mother Black Bear knee-deep in the riffles as she waited, claws outspread, as still as a log, for a fish to come swimming by. The two new little black cubs were sitting on the over-hanging bank, their chubby legs stretched out before them in a fat V, as they watched her.

Twinkly, thinking to leap out and startle them, was tiptoeing softly through the brush behind them when his foot loosed a stone. It rolled down the bank, first striking Bluff, then Boxer, ere it came to a standstill in a little hollow. Each cub blamed the other for the mishap, and the pair began to fight, while the real malefactor's little black eyes twinkled more than ever.

A spank apiece from Mother Black Bear settled the dispute, and insured good behavior,—at least until the next time. Then she tossed a particularly fat old trout up the bank for herself.

The wee cubs were not weaned yet. But the fish was a pretty, wriggling thing, and both cubs longed to play with it. Bluff made cautiously as if to steal it from her, whereupon he received a cuff that sent him sprawling. While Mother Black Bear's head was turned the other way, he made off with the fish, and it was only after repeated commands—spoken away down in the depths of her throat—that he decided he had better return it.

"Silly things!" Twinkly told himself. "Always getting into some kind of trouble!"

But at this moment, as he ambled quietly away, the ribbon of the breeze brought to his nose the odor of ripe blueberries,—and this time he knew he was on the home range. He proceeded to follow his nose, which was much sharper than his eyes. It led to a birch-bark pail brimming over with the

great ripe berries from one of the south-slanting ranges. That same brainy nose told him that a boy's hand had held that berry pail, but it also told him that the boy himself had gone.

Five minutes later the last luscious berry had disappeared down the greedy red throat. —Then a crackling of the underbrush sent him scurrying.

The Boy from the Valley Farm, returning for the berries he had left when he stopped to fish, gazed, mystified, at the empty pail!

Now Twinkly Eyes had been watching the man cub (as he called the Boy), likewise the Hired Man from the Valley Farm, who carried the black thunder-stick. For the yearling cub had paid many a delightful visit, in the dead of night, to the sugar camp over in the maple woods.

At the memory of the boiling sap, half sweet, half pungent, his mouth watered, and he licked his chops regretfully.—Yes, he had paid many a visit to the sugar camp that spring, and many's the narrow squeak he'd had from the Man with the gun. Always he

had escaped by some fox-like manœuvre. But now it was all over. The sap no longer ran into the birch-park pails, nor boiled in the huge iron kettle that had hung from a chain over the glowing coals. The last visit had rewarded him with but a few licks at the sweetened places where syrup had spilled on rocks and fallen logs.

(But the Hired Man had never ceased his effort to catch the little black bear.)

## CHAPTER II

### IN THE NICK OF TIME

ABSOLUTELY without warning (for the pit had been cleverly made), Twinkly Eyes felt the ground give way beneath him.

Crashing through a mass of boughs and leaves, down, down, down he went, to the bottom of a hole so deep that, as the mass of rubbish came tumbling in on top of him, he felt as if he were buried.

The scent of the Hired Man's hands could still be detected on the broken boughs, and the little bear knew whom he had to thank for his mishap.

My, how furious it made him! How he clawed and scrambled to get out! But the pit was a deep one, and as fast as he found a foot-hold it crumbled beneath him.

To make matters worse, the sky now began to flash with lightning, and the moun-

tain peaks resounded with the roll of thunder. Twinkly Eyes had always been afraid in a thunder storm (though Mother Black Bear had tried hard to make him see the folly of it), and he was the more frightened now that he was helpless.

The pelting rain that followed made it even harder to gain a foot-hold on the steep sides of the bear-pit. Some sixth sense warned him that he must win free, or the man would come and find him at his mercy.

But as if the little prisoner were not already quite miserable enough, the downpour began to fill the bottom of the pit with icy water. Twinkly shivered,—more with fright than cold, but still, it was getting mighty uncomfortable down there. It is one thing to plunge into sun-lit waters for a swim, and quite another to have to stand in water up to your shoulders.—(For it was soon neck deep in the narrow pit, what with the rivulets that came draining down from the rocky hill-side into it.)

Then he remembered something that Mother Black Bear had once said to him:

"When you've hit bottom, you've no farther to fall," she had told him. "So when matters get their very worst, they can't get any 'worser,' can they?—And that means they're bound to get better."

(Mother Black Bear had in mind that under the spur of disaster, one calls upon one's most valiant efforts,—all one's hidden powers,—to turn the tide of ill fortune.)

Meantime the water was rising fast. Now it was up so high that he had to keep his muzzle pointed skyward to keep from drowning. A little more, and it would be clear over his head, he told himself despairingly. He really wished now that the Hired Man *would* come. Then at least he could put up a fight for his life.—Now he was helpless.

But was he?—His guardian spirit must have whispered: "How about your good old motto, 'Never say die till you're dead'?"

Then, as always when danger seemed upon him (provided he stopped to think), an idea came to him. It was now deep enough to tread water,—and although the pit was too narrow for regular swimming, he could keep

right on treading water, couldn't he? That would at least keep his nose above-board.

Thunders rolled: lightnings flashed: and tree-tops swayed in the veering wind. Deeper and deeper came the water in the bear-pit,—and over on the shore of Lone Lake was the huntsman who would come in the morning to see what he had caught.

But Twinkly Eyes kept treading water in the well his pit had become, while the swelling rivulet filled it to the very brim.

Ceaselessly he paddled, not daring to stop for an instant's rest for fear he should sink and drown. His legs ached with fatigue. How much longer could he keep it up?

As suddenly as it had come, the storm was over, and a misty moon began peeping through the parting clouds. Twinkly gave a gasp of surprise. For with the filling of his pit, his head had risen with the water level.—He had risen clear to the top!—He could reach the rim!

It took him less than half a minute to scramble out of his strange tank and race from the scene of his troubles.

## CHAPTER III

### A JOKE ON THE HIRED MAN

WHEN the little bear awoke from his afternoon nap, it was dark, and the dew had damped the grass. He had an uneasy sense that trouble threatened.

"What is it?" he asked himself. "There isn't a creature in these woods that would hurt a bear, unless it was a bull moose in a fighting mood; and then I don't believe he'd hurt me if I kept out of his way. Besides, one doesn't see a moose once in a coon's age."

But some sixth sense, (the sense of things about to happen with which wild folk are endowed), kept whispering: "Danger!—Danger is near!"

Twinkly shrank back noiselessly into the deeper shadows, and held his breath to listen. Sure enough, there was a snapping of twigs, —now faint and far away, but coming

nearer. The little bear edged still further into the concealing brush. Now a shift in the moist night wind brought to his nose a taint. He sniffed warily. Was it the man with the gun?—His lips drew back in a voiceless snarl, and hot rage filled his breast. Then the sounds drew away again, and down on the shore of Lone Lake a tiny flame sprang up.

It had been like that at the sugar camp,—always a fire when night came. But of course this might be only the little man-cub, who was entirely harmless.

Twinkly longed to rush down and make sure. But that sixth sense,—or was it the spirit of some great-great-grandfather, who watched him from the starry heights of the Happy Hunting Grounds?—bade him beware. At any rate, he lost no time in putting several miles between himself and the mysterious camp-fire.

Morning found him hunting mushrooms in the spruce woods. The sun was trying to burn through a mist that rose whitely from Lone Lake, and hung in blue-gray shadows

up and down the brook beds. The dew lay heavy on the ground, making the scent of his foot-prints doubly strong. In the uncanny stillness that the ceasing of the wind had brought, he began to wonder if it had all been a dream about the camp-fire on the lake shore.

He decided to go and see. But he would leave no tell-tale tracks. He would pick his steps, as far as possible, among the thickly fallen leaves or the rocks and down-logs, avoiding the bare earth. When he came to Beaver Brook, he accidentally left a foot-print on the muddy bank, but cleverly trampled it out till no one could have told whether he was going or coming. Then for a time he waded.

Arrived at the scene of the camp-fire, whose embers were now white ash, he found it had been deserted some time since. But though the scent was faint, the first hasty sniff assured him that it was the camp of the Hired Man.

There were two more odors that interested him greatly. One was that of iron, like the

Hired Man's gun. (At that point his fur rose along the back of his neck, his lips bared in a snarl, and he rose on tip toe and sniffed this way and that to see if the man was near.)

The other smell was the delicious fragrance of smoked ham, (which he had never tasted, but felt sure he'd like to.) That was worth investigating. He wondered if the ham and the gun had gone in the same direction. He decided it was worth taking a chance to find out.—Besides, he must locate the enemy, the better to avoid him.

Meantime, he was hungry, and there was Pecan, the black cat of the woods,—cousin to Madame Mink,—fishing one trout pool after another and leaving half his catch uneaten. A fearful waste, thought Mother Black Bear's young hopeful.—But he could remedy that. His little black eyes twinkled as he followed at a polite distance behind the wasteful one.

After that he had time to watch Mother Black Bear, who was finding it all but impossible to make the wee new cubs behave this

morning. Every time she tossed a fish to shore, both Bluff and Boxer grabbed for it; then they generally bumped each other on the sensitive tips of their noses, and forgot the fish in scrapping it out. Their little teeth were needle-sharp, when they abandoned their furry boxing gloves and clinched.

Then Mother Black Bear would scold, and they would hang their heads, or perhaps go galloping into the lake and race each other with loud splashes that scared the trout into the depths of the pools, so that there was nothing to do but to go in search of a new fishing ground.

How Twinkly loved it all,—the woods life!

Just then a snapping twig away up on the hill-side made him turn to listen. In that instant something *whizzed* past his shoulder, and a terrific crash smote his ears like thunder. It was the Hired Man with the gun.

"Quick!" breathed Mother Black Bear, shoving her cubs into the nearest cover. "It's a hunter, sure as fate!"

"That was what I call a close shave," Twinkly told himself, as the odor of singed

fur reached his nostrils. And he too sought cover.

All that day the little bear was conscious that the Hired Man was on his trail. Now, indeed, he was glad he had watched Frisky Fox. For it took fox-like manœuvres to keep out of gun range.

On and on he pussy-footed it, using every strategy he knew,—and the little black bear was a good scout, let me tell you. He could easily have gotten away among the high peaks, but his curiosity was too much for him. He must learn the whereabouts of the invader, or he would never know when he might stumble on him unexpectedly.

Once when he felt the need of a moment's rest, he hid behind a boulder and waited for the man to pass. But his shadow,—lying long across the path,—gave him away. The man was taken by surprise, however, and Twinkly, with an angry chopping of his jaws, charged him full tilt. The man raised his gun to fire, but Twinkly Eyes was already dodging off between the tree trunks at the speed of an express train, and when he

"Aiming with eyes still heavy with sleep"

finally paused like a black stump to peer behind him, the man had lost sight of him entirely.

After that the little bear was tired. Taking to the top of a pine tree, he clamped his legs about a limb and slept.

In that darkest hour between night-fall and moon-rise, he roused himself. Of course he was famished, after his hard day. Then an idea set his little black eyes to twinkling more than ever. Tip-toeing softly along the trail of the huntsman, he came at last to where he had made that night's camp. He, too, was tired out with his chase. He slept soundly.

His fire leapt brightly in the clearing, a fact that at first kept the little bear at a distance. But—joy of joys!—from the side of the crude lean-to in whose shelter the Hired Man had made his bed, hung the ham whose odor was so tantalizing!

Twinkly Eyes made a slow, stealthy approach from the rear; then, summoning all his courage to cross the circle of the firelight, he grabbed the prize!

At that moment the man awoke. Reaching instinctively for his gun, he peered after his rapidly disappearing visitor, aiming with eyes still heavy with sleep. His shot, of course, went wild.

Before he could pull the trigger a second time, the little black rascal had placed a good safe distance between them,—the ham still gripped tightly between his greedy jaws!

## CHAPTER IV

### SURPRISES

FROM Twinkly's point of view, he had found the ham on his own home range, on which the Hired Man was intruding.

However, he realized that the man creature had brought it there, and the thought tickled him immensely.

For days to come, though, his life was to be in danger.—So, also, was cross old Chetwoof's. Nor was the Hired Man's gun all they had to look out for. Once the little bear just avoided stepping on a trap. It was baited with ham!

But though he had too large a bump of caution to venture back, the odor was so tempting that he could not bring himself to leave it.

This trap, as it happened, was set on that No Man's Land, the lake shore. Presently

Chetwoof came shambling along. He paused in a leisurely manner to sharpen his claws on a birch tree, preparatory to spearing a fish. "E-wow-wow," he muttered sleepily.

Soon he began to sniff. Ham he had never tasted, but all the same, he knew it was something good. Twinkly watched quietly from behind two tree trunks that grew close together,—a favorite vantage point.

Now Chetwoof was experienced in the ways of man. Winters when the wolverine robbed the fur traps, the trappers used to blame it on old Chetwoof,—though he was very likely to be deep in his winter sleep at the time,—the best kind of alibi. But his foot-prints were much like those of the thieving skunk-bear, (as the wolverine is called,) —which was circumstantial evidence,—and the real bear often got the blame for the ruined furs. He was therefore used to coming upon the bear-traps that were baited for himself.

But he had learned wisdom,—at the expense of a toe or two. Quick to turn misfor-

tune into good, he had discovered how to spring the traps and eat the bait intended for him, without being made a prisoner.

Today, as Twinkly watched him, he simply dug the trap out of the ground where it had been so cunningly concealed; and turning it bottom uppermost, he sprang it and helped himself to the ham rind.

"That certainly was clever!" admired Twinkly Eyes, ever ready to do justice to an enemy.

But he did not envy Chetwoof long. Later that same day he found the greedy, battle-scarred old fellow rolling about in agony. He had eaten a piece of poisoned bait that the man had thought it would be fun to leave there for someone of the bear tribe.—But Chetwoof was soon gobbling down every emetic mushroom he could find, red-peppery taste and all, lest he yield his life and his fur coat to the man with the queer idea of a good time.—He came out of that experience a sadder, but a wiser bear.

After that, for awhile, Twinkly Eyes saw

nothing of either Chetwoof or the man, and he was free to have a good time himself.

He loved to watch the otters,—queer, puppy-like creatures, with their long tails that helped so much in swimming and coasting. The entire otter family would spend hours and hours of a moonlight night just sliding down a mud bank into the pool beneath, clambering out again and mounting the incline for another slide.

One night he waited till they had gone fishing, then he too tried the mud bank, and the moon smiled at the little rascal, as he seated himself square on his haunches like a fat pup and coasted.

After all, there was no use in taking life too seriously, Mother Nature might have told him, (had she been in the habit of telling her secrets). The chief reason why the bear has survived so wonderfully in a changing world is just that ability of his to play. For in play he is continually strengthening his body and quickening his brain, developing resource, courage and kindliness. (And isn't it a lucky thing for the other forest folk

that, with all his size and cunning, he is so good-natured?)

The never-ending search for food that his appetite demands only means berrying and fishing, and playing tag with mice and grasshoppers, and hunting for tasty wild flowers. That way, he has learned to eat all kinds of food, and never a season comes but he knows where to find something good.

But the little black bear was not the only one of the forest folk with a sense of humor. Mrs. Night-hawk had a bit of mischief in her make-up. For the longest time, Twinkly thought the beaver meadow simply infested with snakes. Everywhere he went these days, he seemed always to be just about to step on something that went "hiss-s-s-s-s!" till he all but jumped out of his skin. "I must be getting nervous," he decided.

Then one night as he was shuffling along, wishing he could find a bee-tree, just as he raised his foot to plant it on a little brown hummock in the meadow grass, it rose with a whirr of wings, its great cricket-catching mouth opened in a hiss.

"Mercy!" gasped the little bear. "Has it been you all this time?"

"It is *this* time," laughed Mrs. Nighthawk. "Were you really frightened? You see, I had to get quick action, or you would have planted your foot in the middle of my back."

With this and other happenings to occupy his mind, Twinkly Eyes thought very little about the Hired Man, though that sixth sense still whispered "Danger!" whenever he came near a trap or exposed himself to gunsight.

One day he met a bull moose towering high above him, with his great pronged antlers, and the little bear decided he had better yield the right of way.

But as events fell out, he was to meet an even graver peril before he had further cause for worry on the man's account.

He had been teetering back and forth on a boulder at the head of a rock-slide when, all of a sudden it set a whole stream of little rocks to sliding. One rock jarred against another till with a growing rumble, a mass of

gliding stone surrounded him on every side.

At the first movement, his uncertain boulder had gone bounding down the gulch and off the precipice with rebounding thunder. The frightened bear slid with the ground beneath him. It was a perilous position. The moment his feet should go out from under him, all those rocks would come pelting down upon him, and he would be crushed beneath their weight.

His hair rose in horror as he saw himself being carried straight at a big boulder that stuck up through the sliding gravel bed. Then he summoned the courage of despair.

With one monstrous leap he made for this safety zone!

## CHAPTER V

### THE TRAP

TWINKLY EYES had certainly had a hair-raising experience on the rock-slide.

Indeed, had it not been for the one huge boulder that stood up so firmly through the moving mass, as it ground its way down the mountain-side, the little black bear would have been crushed beneath the avalanche.

As it was, he had kept his wits about him, and at the very moment when it seemed as if he were about to be hurled crushingly against the boulder, he had leapt to its top, and clung there while the smaller stones flew by beneath him.

At last it was over, and the stone slope lay quiet. But it was a mighty scared little bear that still clung to his pinnacle of safety.

His first impulse, when the slide had

stopped, was to bolt like mad away from the danger zone. But bears are brainy people, and on second thought he realized that the peril was by no means wholly past; for if he ran, he might again start the rock-slide into action before he was half way across it.

No, the wise thing was to take his bearings first, and study the lay of the land in all four directions.

A careful scrutiny convinced him that the narrowest part of the slide lay to his right. Creeping ever so carefully over the treacherous footing, so as not to dislodge a single stone, he presently reached firm ground. With a grunt of relief he raced away from the unpleasant place as fast as his legs could carry him.

It is hard for either a boy or a bear cub to keep out of mischief for long.

"I wonder!" Twinkly asked himself one day, remembering the sticky maple sap into which he had so often dipped his paw, "I just wonder if there isn't some more of that sweet taste around there," and once more he made for the deserted sugar camp, this

time trying it boldly from the man trail. Never before had he dared to make his way along the man trail. Perhaps he could still find some crumb or stain of the sugar around the deserted cabin.

The little log shack now lay gleaming in all the whiteness of fresh peeled logs before him. Suddenly his left fore foot was seized in a grasp that wrung a snarl of pain from his lips. He wrenched angrily at the Thing. Then came fear,—fear of the steel Thing that held him fast,—and with it the memory of how Mother Black Bear had likewise been caught in a trap, and had struggled and clawed and bit at the Thing all one dreadful night in the effort to tear free. How she had clawed and chewed, and boxed and wrestled with the great log to which the trap was attached, dragging it with her till it caught between two trees and could go no further.—But in some mysterious way the trap had opened for her at the last.

No, the thing was still mysterious! And so he too wrenched and struggled, and

growled and whimpered, and did everything except give up hope of winning free.

The crescent moon looked down on his agony of effort, and watching, passed around the sky. The stars came out: the stars went in again, all but the one big bright one in the East, that waited till the sun should begin stirring in his bed, driving the grayness from the sky. And still Twinkly struggled, his paw hurting worse and worse.—And still the iron Thing showed no sign of giving way.

Then—climax of all his misery—human foot-steps sounded down the trail, and the Hired Man came striding into view, a huge bark berry pail in either hand. Now surely the end had come, thought Twinkly Eyes,—for the Hired Man had seized a club. But the little black bear prepared to sell his life at a price.

## CHAPTER VI

### AN UNGRATEFUL GUEST

"STOP!"

It was the Boy from the Valley Farm, racing pell-mell down the trail, his bark berry pail cast to the winds.

There followed exciting talking on the Man's part. But the Boy—small as he was—seemed by some mysterious power to have the final say in the matter. Twinkly, watching, (crouched for the last desperate spring,) saw that the Hired Man dropped his club. The Boy it was who approached. Twinkly prepared to defend himself, though he could not, for the life of him, see that the Boy had either teeth or claws to put up much of a fight.

Then the Hired Man returned with a great, heavy sugar cask, and holding it before him, the open end toward the prisoner, approached.

Twinkly, with a roar of wrath, strove to dart to one side of the barrel. But the barrel also darted to one side, and in some mysterious manner he found himself inside it. Then the cover was slipped under the open end, the cask was turned the other end up (and Twinkly with it) and the lid was clamped on fast. My, what a struggle the furry little fellow did put up! But it was no use at all. Only—in the general excitement—his paw had been released from the trap.

Then the sound of retreating foot-steps told him that the Hired Man had gone back the way he had come. The Boy stayed to speak more of the soothing words, and to bore some air holes into the cask. He even poked some tiny lumps of maple sugar from his lunch pail through the air holes. The little bear was no wise mollified, but he saw no reason why he should not eat the sugar just the same.

Later the Hired Man returned with a horse and jumper (one of the stout backwoods sleds that can be dragged over the

roughest trail), and the barrel and the bear made the journey to the Valley Farm. It was a puzzling and rather terrifying experience for a yearling cub, and he was all ready once more to fight for his life when the lid was removed from his sugary prison cell.

Here another surprise met him. He rushed forth, only to be smothered in an armful of blankets; and though he managed to accomplish wonders with his claws, (as the Hired Man's yell of pain attested), he emerged with a doggy-smelling collar about his neck and a clanking chain connecting the collar with a wire clothes line that stretched the length of the barn-yard.

A kindly looking Farmer came to inspect. "Oh, Father," exclaimed the Boy, "he stepped into Jake's trap, and I want to keep him."

The Farmer looked extremely dubious.

"Just till his foot heals?"

"Well, you can try it. But you can't tame a bear that old."

Thus Twinkly Eyes became a beloved but ungrateful guest.

There were half frightened faces that peered at him from the safety of the kitchen door (though Twinkly Eyes was the more afraid,) and soft, high pitched voices, one that of the Boy's mother, the other that of a little man-cub in blue calico skirts and bare brown legs.

A great V-shaped flock of wild geese was honk-a-tonk-a-tonking northward at this moment, and they stared amazed at the strange spectacle of a Boy offering the angry, frightened little bear all manner of good things to eat,—albeit at a safe distance from the white teeth from which his lips wrinkled back in a growl of warning.

Time passed, and as day after day went by and he received only kindness and soft speech, the little bear began to understand that he was not to be devoured after all, but instead, was to have more good things to eat than he could stow away,—which is saying a very great deal. He also felt better natured as his paw began to heal.

The Hired Man he never would have any use for, but the Boy was not a bad sort, and

would really—he thought—have made a pretty decent bear himself, what with his ability to go about on his hind legs, and box and wrestle, and catch fish, and eat incredible quantities of sweets and berries.

Had Twinkly Eyes been that year's cub, he could have been tamed easily enough. But after a year in the wild, it was impossible to make him contented on the end of a chain. On the other hand, had he been used to human kind, the usual sort that tease and torture, or try to murder every bear they see, he never would have gotten up the courage even to wrestle with his little captor,—as he soon learned to do. But remember, he was a backwoods bear, and this was a backwoods farm, and he had never seen human kind before the coming of the sugar camp to his domain. Besides, here never a hand was raised against him, while he was treated daily to such delicacies as he had scarcely dreamed of, in his woods life.

## CHAPTER VII

### A GREAT FIND

GRADUALLY the little bear stifled his natural longing to return to freedom, (at least, till he should see a chance of escape,) by investigating the strange things he saw everywhere about him.

To begin with, there were the horses,—who had stampeded at the first whiff of him, and who shied even now in passing. There were the cows, who had milled about him with lowered horns, the day Twinkly Eyes had explored the milking yard. There was Lop Ear, the spotted hound, who had at first been torn between wrath and fear, but who had finally been taught to keep his distance and maintain his peace. There were the chickens, who scattered wildly at his approach and from whom he was barred absolutely by a high wire fence. There was also

Thomas the black cat, between whom and himself no love was lost.

But there were also countless field mice, whose retreats he smelled out with that wondrous nose of his, and whom he spent gleeful hours in digging out, to the farmer's great surprise,—and also that of Thomas. He could beat the black cat twelve times over at catching mice. Thomas watched, green eyed with envy, as Twinkly snapped up mouse after mouse. (For bears are Mother Nature's prize mouse traps, it seems.)

Then one day the Boy took a basketful of quartered seed potatoes and planted them in careful rows up and down the field.

All that day the most delicious odor came to Twinkly's nostrils, that could smell out a root away under ground as no human nose could. It fairly made his mouth water.

That night, as luck would have it, the farmer loosed the chain from the clothes-line, (to-morrow being wash-day,) and fastened it to the fence that enclosed the potato field.

Oh, joy of joys for Twinkly Eyes! No

sooner had the farmer gone than the little bear sniffed, and he snuffed, and he pawed, and he clawed, till he had dug out a couple of the delicious smelling roots.

My, how good these strange roots tasted to him! How sweet compared to the skunk cabbages and the biting jack-in-the-pulpit bulbs with which he had sought to satisfy his craving for fresh vegetables in the woods! More luscious even than the tender roots of the little hog peanuts of his wild wood; or even the Golden Club or Jerusalem Artichokes.

"A feast! Hurray!" sang the little black bear with a happy whine.

A feast he certainly had that night. For by yanking his chain along the fence, peg by peg, he had soon demolished several rows of the Boy's planting. He was certainly in luck, for once, he told himself. And his little black eyes twinkled with delight, as he licked his chops and sniffed about to see if there were more that he could reach.—Then he curled up and had a snooze, his furry black sides comfortably rounded.

The next day at dawn the Boy, trudging barn-ward to feed the stock, gave one gasp of dismay, as he saw the torn earth where the seed potatoes had been planted. Then he doubled up with laughter.

Twinkly awoke, as peal after peal of mirth assailed his unaccustomed ears, and with one half closed eye he surveyed the scene. He tried to tell himself that he had only done what little black bears are supposed to do. In the woods he dug roots all day long. But all the same, he knew he was on the Boy's range now, and he more than half suspected that he had taken advantage of the Boy's good nature.

Then as it slowly dawned on him that he was the cause of all that laughter, a shamed look stole into his roguish countenance, and he crept under the partial hiding of a blackberry bush, wishing he could crawl into a hole and then pull the hole in after him, the way Fatty Chuck appears to do when in trouble.

But the Boy was soon too busy to notice him, for what would happen to his pet if he

didn't get some more potatoes planted before his father came?

"You little black rascal!" exclaimed the Boy, as he surveyed the rows where Twinkly had rooted up the seed potatoes. And Mother Black Bear's young hopeful pretended harder and harder that he was fast asleep at the end of his chain.

But underneath all his dismay at what his bear had done, the Boy knew he must protect him from the farmer's justifiable displeasure, or he might no longer be permitted to keep his furry playfellow.

## CHAPTER VIII

### TWINKLY EYES REPENTS

THE Boy set to work as fast as he was able to replant the rows the little bear had destroyed before his father should find what had happened. For it would be much easier to confess, if the Boy could point to the field all planted again as good as new.

After that he turned his attention to the weeding of the corn-field, taking Twinkly Eyes along for company, and tethering him just out of reach. The corn was only a few inches high, and the Boy had to take great care not to mistake it for grass and pull it up.

The little bear sniffed longingly, for he dearly loved green, growing things. Then his sharp ears caught a tiny squeak, and he realized that a nest of field mice was somewhere just under-ground. Field mice were

his specialty, so he set to work, and half pawing, half rooting into the soft soil, he soon had about eight of the little pests where they, and the eighty children and eight hundred grandchildren they would have had that summer, could never destroy the farmer's crops.

By and by the Boy went into dinner.—Twinkly Eyes also felt that it was dinner time, but he knew he must not climb the fence and root up the tender corn shoots. No indeed! He was going to be a good bear after this!—But really, he could get along perfectly well without the corn. For a little further down along the fence, his keen nose told him, was something even better. All his little year of life he had hunted out wild onions as a particular treat.

Hitching his chain along the fence as he had before,—sure enough, there were the onions his clever nose had told him he would find! Proud of his woodcraft, he set his clever paws to work, and soon he had uprooted all the onions he could eat. This time, surely, he told himself, he was playing

safe. For had not Mother Black Bear herself taught him to hunt onions?

But there were many things about this strange life at the Valley Farm that the little bear could not understand. One of these he learned when the Boy came back. The Boy was really provoked. For these were not the wild onions of the woodland. Twinkly Eyes had uprooted the farmer's choicest onion sets, planted so carefully the week before.

The Boy knew better than to try to punish the little bear by a blow. He realized that would only undo the effect of the kindness by which he had tried to tame him. But how to bring the little mischief maker to realize that he *must not* dig things up this way? In the woods where Twinkly Eyes belonged, it was the right thing for him to dig up all the wild vegetables he could find. The Boy had never heard that mischief is only energy misplaced. But something of this thought was running through his head as he studied the merry face of the little bear.

Then a bright idea came to him.—A half

hour later Twinkly found himself shut into a stout packing box behind the barn. It was a crate in which some farm machinery had come, and it was as strong as iron. No hope of breaking through that, he found. It would be a matter of patiently chewing a way out. And what was the use, when he would still be on the end of the chain and the Boy could put him back again? He quickly decided to waste no time in so hopeless an undertaking. Instead, he whined pleadingly in the effort to tell the Boy he had meant no harm. But the farmer's son thought he had better learn his lesson once for all, and so left him chained a prisoner.

Twinkly's heart was near to bursting,—first with wrath at what was, to his mind, the injustice of his punishment, then with hurt that the Boy, whom he had thought his friend, should have turned upon him. Then the Boy came back with some table scraps of which the little bear was particularly fond, and he decided he might as well enjoy what he could of the situation.

But about this time, Thomas, the black cat, came by, and sniffing greedily at the prisoner's dinner, sneaked up just beyond Twinkly's reach, and watched for the chance to steal a morsel.

Twinkly gave a growl of warning. Worse than the thieving was the gleam of malicious pleasure in the yellow eyes of Thomas at sight of the humiliation of his rival mouser. How Twinkly hated that sneaking cat!—(Perhaps because Thomas reminded him of Bobby Lynx, the wild cat, who was always trying to steal his fish.) This animal was ever so much smaller, but like Bobby, the little bear decided, a coward and a sneak-thief.

But wait! He'd show him yet! (Thomas sat just out of reach, devouring the choicest morsel from Twinkly's feeding pan.)

When at last, toward evening, the Boy came again, and saw how like a great, fat, pleading-eyed puppy the dejected little bear looked up at him, he decided his prisoner had repented quite enough, and released him to the comparative freedom of the long chain.

This, Twinkly began straightway yanking up and down the length of the clothes-line to see how far he could go,—for in the back of that long head of his was a plan.

## CHAPTER IX

### THOMAS ALSO REPENTS

TWINKLY waited till, with the coming of darkness, the black cat came to watch for the mice that scurried from their hiding places to pick up the scattered grain. He would have to corner Thomas, he well knew, else the old cat could simply race beyond his reach, and Twinkly would be helpless to lay a paw on him.

Suddenly Thomas pounced for a mouse, and the mouse ran squeaking into the wood-pile, which stood staked up against the back of the barn. Here was Twinkly's chance!

Quick as a wink, the little bear pounced after the cat, the cat dove into a hole in the wood-pile where a log was missing, and Twinkly stood guarding the hole.

"Now I've got you, you old sneak, you!" growled the little bear in the depths of his chest.

"You haven't got me yet, and what's more, you're not going to get me!" Thomas hissed, snapping at Twinkly's furry paw with claws out.

"You'll see whether I've got you or not," grumbled Twinkly Eyes.

"You certainly can't reach me here," yowled Thomas.

"Can't, eh?—Well, you just wait and see. I'm not so easily discouraged as all that!" and the little bear set to work to carry out his threat.

Now Thomas was at the other end of the hole the missing log had left. It was much farther than Twinkly's farthest reach. But bears have paws almost as clever as human hands. They use them for knife and fork and spoon, shovel and pick axe, and climbing irons, and comb, and boxing gloves, and fishing tackle, and half a dozen other things as well. And Twinkly had watched the Boy and seen the way he carried in wood for his mother.

The next thing Thomas knew, the woodpile was being hurled apart, log by log, and

the little bear still stood guard at the end of the tunnel in which Thomas had made himself a prisoner.

Then at last Twinkly Eyes had cleared a space so large that he could crawl in after Thomas. Grabbing the yowling cat, (whose teeth and claws he minded not at all through his thick fur,) the little bear hauled him forth.

The cat naturally expected to be killed and eaten. But Twinkly was by preference a vegetarian, (except for small, tender mice and grasshoppers and an occasional speckled trout). He had no stomach for his enemy. But he did mean to punish him.

Thrusting the protesting animal into the box in which he himself had spent the afternoon repenting at his leisure, he seated himself comfortably in front of the little doorway, and prepared to spend the night on guard,—while the mice scurried back and forth in the moonlight, and Thomas glowered helplessly at his captor. And there the Boy found them at dawn.

## CHAPTER X

### "SAFETY FIRST!"

NOW Twinkly Eyes had always been fond of watching Frisky Fox. The little red-brown mouser, with his pointed nose and bushy tail, was so clever in everything he did!

If the little bear's furry sides were comfortably full, and he wasn't too busy hunting grasshoppers, he used to watch every time he heard Frisky's sharp little high-pitched bark on the hill ridge back of the barn, to see what he could see. Sometimes—before he came to the farm—he even used to follow, padding softly just far enough behind to let Frisky know that he didn't mean to interfere with his hunting. At these times he tried everything that the fox pup tried,—if a fat little clown in fur *can* imitate one so light and dainty as a red fox pup.

When Frisky would leap suddenly to one

side of the trail, landing perhaps on the top of a rock—where his feet would leave no scent,—Twinkly Eyes would try his best to make the same leap to another rock,—and you would be surprised to see how light he was when he tried to be! He could move as soundlessly as any one in the woods, when he set out to follow a trail. Only he never could leap so far as Frisky.

The violets were scenting the dewy air one starry night when Twinkly Eyes, still as a mouse, at the end of his chain, decided to see what Frisky Fox was up to.

First the fox pup yipped at a prickly porcupine who sat in a hump on a limb. But that was only a bluff. He had had one experience trying to bite a porcupine, and once was more than enough. Next he dug out a nest of mice. Twinkly's mouth would have watered, only he was already so stuffed with grubs and grasshoppers and field mice that he hadn't room left for anything.

Next the fox pup chased red-brown Madame Mink, whom he found in the tunnel leading out of a mouse nest. (He had no

more chance of catching her than anything in the world, as Madame Mink promptly made for the nearest tree, where Frisky could not follow.)

Then it was a woodchuck he tried to rout, just for the fun of digging. But the faster he worked, the faster the chuck dug himself a new tunnel, till he got under a boulder.

After that Frisky tried another burrow, whose main entry-way,—had he looked close enough,—was speckled with soft little black and white hairs half hidden in the mud. But Frisky did *not* look close enough, for he was young and rash, and had forgotten all about a certain warning Mother Red Fox had once given him.

Twinkly sat behind a big rock where he could see all that went on.

Well it was for Twinkly Eyes that his chain kept him far away! In fact, he soon wished it was even farther,—though he wouldn't have missed what followed for anything on earth.

Now Frisky Fox had learned a very great deal his first summer,—which was the year

before. But he had been so tiny that even Mother Red Fox could not teach him everything. Then had come white weather, and ever so many woods folk had nestled themselves into their dens and gone to sleep for the winter. The person whose front door he was now examining was one of those who hibernate, which may have been one reason why the red fox pup had never happened to meet him.

But, as it happened, a very queer fellow lived in that under-ground home. Twinkly Eyes had often seen him from a distance, but Mother Black Bear had always taught him never to go near, though he couldn't imagine why.—(He had meant some time to find out!)

Yes, he had often seen the two white stripes and the bushy white-tipped tail that told the wood folk it was Mephitis the skunk.

Before that evening was over, Twinkly Eyes was genuinely ashamed of one member of his family tree. For Mephitis too was his cousin, as are all the wood folk who walk

on a flat hind foot like a child. But then, Old Mother Nature has given each beast and bird and fish some way of keeping itself from being hurt by others, and so it must be quite all right. She has given speed to the deer, that he may run away from his enemies; and fighting strength to the wild-cat, and prickles to the porcupine, and protective color to the little brown ducks,—who can scarcely be seen on their nests,—and both speed and cleverness to the fox, that he may catch his food as well as run from danger. And to the bear, highest in rank among the wood folk, and perhaps most valuable in Nature's plan, she has given both strength and speed, with plenty of brains for good measure.

To Mephitis wise Mother Nature has given another means of defense,—though Frisky Fox had yet to find that out!

Now Mephitis might almost be taken for a black pussy-cat, except for the white stripes down his sides. But when you come to look closely at him you will see that his hips stand up in an arch, making him walk ridiculously like a caterpillar.

It had been a peaceful evening for Mephitis. He had ridded the woods of seven field mice and eighteen beetles, to say nothing of enough grasshoppers, toads and grass snakes to make a nice variety. No one had dared molest him. Now he slept.

In a burrow only a little more concealed, with two back doors instead of only one, lay Mrs. Mephitis with ten of as cunning kittens as ever you saw. And each of the ten new baby skunks had a tiny white stripe down the middle of its nose, and two broad stripes on its back, just like father's. Thus far, they were as clean and sweet as any barn-yard Tabby's little family, too. They were delightful, when they didn't get angry.

Suddenly Mephitis heard someone pawing and digging at the entrance to his home. That would never, never do. Who could it be that dared?—Emerging suddenly, he showed his pointed face, with the little white stripe running down the middle of his nose. Even that had no effect. To his amazement, the fox pup only backed away for a moment, then came back at him, threatening instant

death. Mephitis stamped and waved the tip of his tail in warning.

Then he stepped leisurely out of his doorway and turned his back on the impudent thing.—The next moment Frisky was enveloped in a spray so acrid and evil-smelling that his eyes were smarting tears and he could hardly gasp for breath.

It took him just about a quarter of a minute to leave that neighborhood!—Such rolling in the sand, such plunging and sousing as he gave himself in the lake, and such a terrible time as Frisky had for the rest of that night, Twinkly Eyes decided he never in all his life had seen before!

In fact, poor Frisky's fur didn't smell clean for weeks afterwards, and it warned all the mice of his coming.

"That's once I played 'safety first'!" chuckled the little black bear. "There are compensations about being on the end of a chain."

## CHAPTER XI

### THE MYSTERY OF THE BERRY PIES

IT was a warm, sunny day. Twinkly Eyes lay sprawled languidly along the limb of an old apple tree, his collar and chain bothering him not at all.

In the woods he would have had his resting places every here and there along the trails he followed in his search for food. Here it had only been with the greatest difficulty that he had managed to climb, with the chain entangling his legs at every move. But it seemed a good, safe place, where no one could surprise him from the rear. He had an outlook over the entire barn-yard and the house beyond, while back of him lay the woods, stretching green up the side of Mount Olaf.

He stretched luxuriously.—Suddenly he smelled the most delicious odor! It was wonderful. It was no odor he had ever

smelled before. It was like blueberries, and it was like the sugar he was always begging. But it was more than that. And it seemed to come straight from the kitchen window sill.

Forgetting for the moment that he was on a chain, he started to drop to the ground, that he might go and investigate.—The next instant there was a jerk, and he was dangling helplessly in mid-air at the end of his chain.

He gave a choked squeal of surprise, then began striking out with all four paws in his effort to get a clutch on the bark. But he hung just too far from either trunk or limb to reach them. Meantime, his eyes were fairly starting from their sockets in his effort to breathe. He had all but hanged himself! For his chain had got caught on the limb and he swung on the short end of it.

Then the little bear's sharp ears caught a sound in the barn, and he made one more effort to voice his misery. It was a faint, hopeless little call,—but the Boy heard it. Racing to the spot where his pet hung helpless, he put his thinking apparatus on high speed. If he waited to climb the tree, his

pet might choke before he could release him. Already the little bear's tongue was hanging from his mouth. There was not an instant to lose.

No, there was a better way! Grabbing a plank that lay on a pile behind the barn, he slanted it ladder-wise against the limb from which Twinkly hung suspended. The little bear did just what the Boy knew he would. Grabbing the plank with all fours, he eased the strain on his collar that was choking him, and once more he could breathe.

The Boy climbed the tree, and began untangling the chain. Twinkly, meantime, growled deeply in his hurt and indignation.

Then the thing was done.

"Come on down, old fellow," urged the Boy. But Twinkly, who did not understand, only growled the more ferociously, clinging with all his might to the plank.

"You're all right now," urged the Boy. "Let go and come down." And he seized one end of the plank and lowered it to the ground.

The victim of the accident, thinking the

Boy had turned upon him and meant to add still further hurt, dropped to the ground with a roar and ran at his supposed tormentor. And he did not realize that the Boy was still his friend till he came back with a peace offering.—But such an offering! From the juicy purple wedge that dripped from his hand came that same wonderful scent of mingled berries and sugar that had started all the trouble. It was blueberry pie, still warm from the oven! The little bear took it in one mouthful, (nearly swallowing the Boy's hand as well,) then begged for more. He was certain he had never, in all his life, tasted anything so good.

After that, it was easy to teach him tricks. The Boy had but to offer him a piece of pie as a reward. Soon he would stand up and beg, and wrestle, and run races with his young keeper.

But a queer thing happened about this time. The Boy's mother had promised to make him blueberry pie every time the Boy brought her the big birchbark pail full of berries. Twinkly Eyes and the farmer's son

used, therefore, to make long expeditions into the woods, the little bear on one end of his chain, the other end of which, for safety's sake, the Boy fastened around his waist. Had Twinkly Eyes but known it, the Boy was as much chained as the bear. But somehow, after his first lesson in the supremacy of human kind, it never occurred to the little fellow. Besides, he loved to go berrying, and when it came time to come home, the Boy always had a few lumps of maple sugar to coax him from the berry patch—for sugar he loved even more than berries.

But though the Boy picked berries, and his mother always made the promised pie, and set it on the window sill to cool, it came to have a mysterious way of disappearing. The first time it happened, the Boy himself was questioned. But he declared he had not touched the pie, and he had a reputation for veracity. It was most peculiar!

Pie after pie disappeared in this way. Every one on the place was questioned.—That is, every one human.—No one could account for it. This was the backwoods, too,

Twinkly Eyes raced about in the wildest excitement

far from the possibility of tramps. The Hired Man rather believed in ghosts, but who ever heard of a ghost that ate blueberry pie?

Then one day the Boy stood guard. Hot from the oven came the pie. It steamed deliciously as it lay cooling on the window sill.

He turned to get a drink of water. Suddenly there was a roar. Chains clanked, and the tin pie plate landed with a crash on the stony ground outside. Dashing to the window to see what had happened, imagine his amazement to see Twinkly Eyes racing about in the wildest excitement, a fragment of hot pie on his nose!

## CHAPTER XII

### WORSE THAN A PORCUPINE

AFTER his experience with the hot pie, Twinkly Eyes became a mighty cautious bear. For he had brains, and one lesson was enough.

For awhile he would not even touch the cold pie the Boy still offered him. The kitchen window-sill was now as safe as a lock-box.

But the little bear was not the only one of the Lone Lake Folk who practised the law of the wild and ate whatever they fancied around the Valley Farm. For Unk Wunk the porcupine knew neither mine nor thine, when he found something good to eat. And every night for weeks now he had come to chew on the porch steps, whose flavor he found to his taste.

The farmer thought it must be for the slight salty flavor, as the prickly one always

chewed on the place where they pounded up the rock salt for the cattle. Now even wild folk must have salt, and had Unk Wunk not been so lazy, he could have found it in the woods. For there is the Sweet Colts-foot, with its perfumed white flowers, in plenty, in the swamp lands. But Unk Wunk does not like swamp lands, and besides, the porch steps were handier. Wherefore it became his nightly habit to pay a visit to the Farm, and the farmer complained that he was ruining the porch.

"Why not leave my bear on guard?" asked the Boy.

"A good idea," decided his father.

That night Twinkly was chained to the porch.

Now Unk Wunk the porcupine had no use at all for the little black bear. For though the prickly one could go his way in peace with most of the forest folk, secure in his armor of barbed quills, the mischievous cub had a way of slipping his long claws under him and with one good biff rolling him down hill.

It was therefore with a grunt of disgust that he discovered Twinkly Eyes there before him in the moonlight.

"Gr-r-r-r-r!" said the little bear, as Unk Wunk ambled fatly into view. "Keep away from here!"

"Keep away yourself!" squeaked the porcupine, "I'm not the one that ought to be afraid."

Twinkly approached with paw outstretched. Unk Wunk humped his back and drew in his nose, and set all his prickers erect. He looked like a fat black needle-cushion with white tips to the needles. No one could touch him that way without getting hurt.

"Just wait," said Twinkly Eyes, sharpening his claws on the steps.

"I'm waiting," grunted the needle cushion.

Circling warily about the intruder, Twinkly Eyes decided that he too must wait. No use trying anything till the prickly one uncurled again. But once let him approach

the porch and biff! He'd get it on the tip of his sensitive nose.

Hours passed. Unk Wunk uncurled every now and again, to see if the way to the steps was open. But Twinkly Eyes still stood on guard. Each time the porcupine uncurled, the little bear sharpened his claws afresh. At last the dawn light sent the stubborn one waddling stupidly back to the woods.

"Now, Father," said the Boy next morning, "let's see if that porcupine did any damage *last* night!"

Then he stared.—For the steps were clawed to splinters.

The little bear had been worse than the porcupine!

## CHAPTER XIII

### LUCK FOR FATTY CHUCK

ONE night the little bear had been listening to the Boy's harmonica.

The Boy had a way of sitting on the fence in the starlight and playing one tune after another, and Twinkly Eyes really enjoyed the music.

Fatty Chuck, the one-armed wood-chuck that lived under the barn-yard fence, also enjoyed it, and came to sit in the shadow of a fence-post. And young Timothy, Mammy Cottontail's youngest brown bunny, came hippity-hop from his home in the old stone wall to listen with long ears cocked forward. (But he never came too near the business end of Twinkly's chain.)

So intent was every one on enjoying the music that no one heard the soft pad-pad of approaching feet, as another visitor came tip-toeing through the moonlight. Had a

breeze been blowing their way, the three furry folk at least would have known by their noses that it was the overgrown young wild cat, Bobby Lynx.

But the breeze was not blowing their way just then,—it was blowing Bobby's way,—and what it told Bobby, as he sniffed this way and that, was that both Fatty Chuck and Timothy were abroad that night. Bobby was no music lover, and he wouldn't have come within eye-shot of the Boy for anything in the world. But he could play a waiting game till the Boy went in.

Now Fatty Chuck would, to his mind, have made the best eating, because there was more to him. But Fatty was too near the barn to be quite safe. Timothy wouldn't amount to much, but he was young and tender, and would taste fine, what there was of him. Besides, it would be much safer to stalk the brown bunny.

Slipping closer inch by inch, his yellow eyes gleaming in the shadows and his tasseled ears twitching with excitement, Bobby Lynx prepared to spring.

But as it happened, Mammy Cottontail was also abroad that night. From where she stood, the breeze carried the danger signal to her wriggling nose. "Stamp—stamp!" warned her long hind feet. Timothy heard, and darted away home—just in time!

"Never mind," thought Bobby Lynx, "I'd rather get Fatty Chuck anyway." He waited till at last the Boy went to bed. Then he crept to where Fatty sat nodding and trying to wake up enough to go home to sleep. One great pounce and he had the wood-chuck between his paws as a cat holds a mouse!

Fatty gave a squeak of despair. For surely, he thought, it was all up with him now. He did make an effort to edge away, and Bobby let him go just far enough to think he had escaped, then pounced on him again. Poor Fatty crouched flat on the ground under the barbed paws, trembling and expecting every instant to be his last.

But there was one thing Fatty had not reckoned on. (Neither had Bobby Lynx,

for a matter of that.) And that was the little black bear.

Now Twinkly had little use for Bobby. Again and again the little bear had caught himself trout, and Bobby had come sneaking by and tried to steal it from him. Sometimes he got away with it, too. Twinkly had no use for cats, wild or tame. He was like a pup that way.

He had known for some time that Bobby was approaching, and he longed to have it out with him for that last stolen fish. But he was a brainy little bear, and he realized that Bobby was still too far away for his chain to reach.

At the very moment that Bobby leapt for Fatty Chuck, Twinkly Eyes was tip-toeing, as silent as a shadow, to pounce on the lynx kitten. As Bobby pounced the second time on poor Fatty, Twinkly landed him a box on the ears.

For the next two minutes and a half, the moon looked down on a whirling ball of fur, half tawny and half black, and Lop Ear leapt from his dreams at the sound of the

awfullest yowls and howls and growls he had ever heard in his life. Then the ball separated, and the yellow part of it made for the woods in wild leaps, while the black part followed as far as his chain would allow.

At the moment of the fight, no one had given a thought to Fatty Chuck. Fatty needed no invitation to go scuttling for his home under the barn-yard fence. For once he had had a stroke of luck!

## CHAPTER XIV

### TWINKLY EYES AND TROUBLE

THE swift, hot summer of the North Woods, with its mosquitoes and its thunder storms, had brought a feast of fruit and flowers and insects to the forest folk.

Twinkly Eyes longed for a cooling swim in the Lake. But still he lived on at the end of a chain in the dusty barn-yard.

Ah, well, he told himself, there was still the pleasure of eating! A number of fascinating odors seemed to come from the store-room at the back of the barn. But the Hired Man slept in a room just above it.

At first the little bear's chain was fastened too far away for him to reach the store-room window. But one night, as luck would have it, the heavy wire clothes-line, up and down which his chain traveled, was

moved a little, and he could make the longed for exploration.

My, what a wonderful place that storeroom was, thought Twinkly Eyes, as he shoved past the loosened window screen. He sniffed about him in the darkness. From somewhere away up high above his head came that luscious odor of maple sugar he had come to crave. Clambering up the shelves (from which he knocked a jumble of things that fell with a crash to the floor), he had just found the syrup can when the shelf itself gave way beneath his weight, and down he came upon the flour barrel. This he over-turned in his frenzy of surprise, and had he but known it, the flour whitened him from top to toe.

The Hired Man, hearing the commotion, came downstairs to see what it was all about, a candle in his hand. Now the Hired Man believed in ghosts, of which he was terribly afraid. Seeing but faintly in the flickering candle light, he beheld a whitened form with gleaming eyes which rose inquiringly to its hind legs at this moment.

With a yell of terror, the Hired Man dropped his candle and ran back to bed, where he lay trembling till day-break with the covers pulled over his head.

A few days later the farmer bade the Hired Man keep an eye out for the fox that every night had come to rob the hen-house.

Without saying a word about it to the Boy, the Hired Man decided to chain Twinkly Eyes inside the hen-yard, believing that no fox would come near with the little bear on guard.

Now Twinkly Eyes had often watched as Old Man Red Fox came tripping down to get a hen for the pups at home, and the little bear had looked on with mouth watering. (For he too loved the chicken bones that the Boy saved for him, every time the farmer had a chicken dinner.)

To-night the old fox came as usual. "Gr-r-r," said Twinkly Eyes, as he heard the thief within the hen-house (whence he had crawled through the tunnel he had dug beneath the fence). But Old Man Red Fox,

minding not one particle, grabbed the fattest hen in sight and set all the flock to cackling and fluttering about in terror.

The noise brought the Hired Man on the run,—for he had been up late that night treating a sick horse.

The instant Old Man Red Fox heard the flying feet approaching, he dropped his hen and ran,—for the white hen would be an easy mark for a man with a gun.

Flinging open the hen-house door, the Hired Man dragged out the injured fowl, which flopped squawking about the hen-yard, its torn feathers flying. Twinkly Eyes, alarmed at the strange commotion, and seeing the Hired Man's gaze fastened upon him accusingly, (for circumstantial evidence was all against him), leapt the fence, jerking so hard on the stake to which his chain was fastened that he uprooted it and dragged it with him.

Had he realized he was free, he would have made for the surrounding hills. The Hired Man, feeling himself to blame, would probably have said nothing about it, for he

was a cowardly fellow, besides, he longed to be rid of the bear. But the dragging chain still made Twinkly feel a prisoner, and his main thought was that he would be blamed for the commotion in the hen-house.

Instead, he ran and climbed into the first hole he saw, which happened to be the boy's ground floor window, and crawled under the bed.

The Boy, half roused from his slumbers, (more by the sound of the chain than the soft padding of the little bear), began to dream. And the bear, finding it dark and peaceful, also fell asleep after a time, and his snores issued rhythmically from beneath the bed.

The Boy's dreams were anything but pleasant. He dreamed that he was a cave man, and that some wild beast lay hidden in his cave,—a dragon who snorted fire, and whom he would have to oust with only his club for a weapon.

Twinkly Eyes was also dreaming. (And had he but known it, his dream was of the days of dinosaurs, the queer creatures who

peopled North America three million years ago. Was it the memory of his three-million-times great grandfather, handed down to him from those days, to remind him that bears had not always been the strongest creatures on the continent?—Or was it the picture of past times sent him by some sprite, some fairy spirit as mischievous as himself, to tease him?)

First came a dinosaur as big as a house, —an elephant-like creature, with the tail of a lizard, and horns like a cow, and an extra horn on his nose for good measure. For a mouth he wore a beak like a turtle's, and each foot had three toes, each toe ending in a hoof. To make the monster more frightful, he wore an enormous up-standing collar of the same horny skin that covered him.

Next Twinkly dreamed of fleeing a somewhat smaller dinosaur, but one he feared even more, as he was covered with horny scales that stuck out sharply all over his back.

In his dream, he ran from this new terror just as the mice had always run from him.

It was a new experience to be, not the chaser, but the chased, (or chasee, as one might say).

But no sooner had he escaped this dinosaur than along came one that stood on his hind legs like a man, only he was as tall as a tree, and dragged behind him a long tail like a lizard's, and his face wore a huge duck's bill.

Twinkly squealed with fright, and in his efforts to escape this awful creature, he woke himself clear up, and went scrambling around the room like mad in search of the way out.

The Boy, roused at last, was petrified with surprise at the dark shape that went clanking over his bed and back again; but he quickly recognized the little rascal, and that said rascal must be taken back to the barnyard.

Needless to say, both the boy and the bear were glad they had only been dreaming, and that the days of dinosaurs and cave-men were past and gone.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE DANCING BEAR

AFTER that adventure, Twinkly tried hard to escape from Valley Farm.

First he tried burying his chain, but always it came clanking after him. Then he dug a tunnel under the fence, but the chain brought him up short, not far from the other side. He played 'possum, hoping they would think him dead, and so take the chain from his neck, but it did not work. He remained a beloved prisoner.

Not that he was altogether unhappy,—much as he longed for the seclusion of the forest. But he did long to climb trees, and go fishing with his claws, and swimming and exploring.

There were times when he had glorious boxing-matches with the Boy. At first the Boy would challenge him. Later he came

to challenging the Boy to these merry bouts, —and if he sometimes seemed a little rough, he didn't mean to be. The hand that fed him he knew for his friend.

Had Twinkly been even a year younger,—say, a four months cub,—the Boy could easily have trained him to carry in the firewood, and do lots of cunning tricks.

He did not have to be taught to charge the Hired Man, with a "woof—woof—woof!" every time he got the chance. And though he would not have dared attack him, he thought it lots of fun to see the fellow run.

Once only did the Boy try to scold him for it. It only made the sensitive captive sullen. For like most self-reliant folk, he was proud, and his pride was hurt by the scolding.

The little bear also took to climbing the barn roof, (when his chain was fastened near enough), for the fun of tobogganing off it "belly-bumps."

One day a traveling showman arrived,—a scowling little black eyed man to whom Twinkly took an instinctive dislike.

(Instinct, you know, is the wisdom that comes, not of your own experience, but that of your ancestors, from whom you have inherited your temper and the shape of your nose. Instinct often tells you something that you need to know for your own safety. It did in this case, as we shall see.)

Limping along behind the Showman, on the end of a little chain, came a dancing bear. Twinkly watched as the Showman put the poor old fellow through his paces.

The show bear afterwards told Twinkly all about it. He had to dance, he said, or he would be starved and beaten, even when his feet were tired and sore, and he felt anything but in a dancing mood.

He had been caught as a tiny cub, and trained to travel about from one back-woods settlement to another with this man, and dance for crowds of staring people, who would then give the Showman money when he passed his tambourine.

The Show Bear was so starved and old that his sides were hollow and he was continually trying to lie down and take a nap.

But this the Showman never allowed him to do, (except when night came).

"I'll be glad to die," the Show Bear told Twinkly Eyes, "and go to the Happy Hunting Grounds. For I've had enough of this kind of life, I can assure you."—And that night his spirit did depart his poor, tired body,—so that the next day the Showman said he was dead, and only Twinkly knew that it was only the furry house in which his spirit had lived for so many years that lay there, while the real bear had gone to a place where he could be a wild bear in the wild woods, as he had always longed to be.

But now the Showman began to look at Twinkly Eyes in a way that made the little bear most uneasy. To the Boy he offered money, saying he needed a new dancing bear; but the Boy indignantly refused it.

That night Twinkly Eyes heard the Showman bargaining with the Hired Man,—and again he felt uneasy.

But the Boy also heard.

"Just wait!" the Showman urged, "Wait

till the family is asleep, and I'll take him away in the dark, and we'll make things look as if he had escaped.—Oh, not to-night.—They'd be suspicious.—Wait a week or so. I'll pretend to go away in the morning, then some night I'll slip back here and take him, if you'll just do as I say, and no one will be the wiser,'' and they whispered together for several minutes, and he gave the Hired Man money.

All the next day the Boy was extremely thoughtful and extremely worried. Just why he did not tell his father about it, we do not know. After all, a Boy is apt to make mistakes. For his father could surely have thought of something to do about it.

The Boy did have a pretty good idea of his own, though.

"Father," he begged, "may I have two or three days to go fishing? I've got the wood all split for a week ahead, and everything. And this isn't a busy season, is it? And I'll bring a fine string of fish, you see if I don't."

His father, who knew the Boy worked hard, consented.

"And may I take my bear?" he asked.

"If you like."

The next hour was joyous with preparation for the camping trip. First—and most important—there was a back-pack to be filled with bread and butter, and bacon packed in a frying pan, and other things, especially a fine lot of little red apples that they both loved. The Boy also took a blanket, an axe, and a handful of matches, and of course a trout rod and a can for bait.

Then with a kiss for his mother, he grasped Twinkly's chain and they were off.

All day they tramped through the September woods,—first down the Old Logging Road, past Pollywog Pond, then down the trail to Rapid River, and half way to Lone Lake. (Twinkly Eyes could have made it in half the time alone and freed from his chain.)

A woodbine hung in a scarlet canopy over the seedling maple under which they lunched, its purple berries pendant from the bent limbs, where Twinkly could reach them for dessert. Others of these graceful vines

clothed the tall trunks about them with the gold and flame of approaching autumn,—as did also that imitation woodbine, the three-fingered poison ivy.

The smaller birds were starting South in flock after joyous flock.

Night found them camping in a little pine-clad knoll, where the Boy made a cheery fire,—(that is, cheery to him, but most distasteful to the little bear),—and fried some bacon.

Long they feasted, (for Twinkly got the pan to lick), and the sun went down, and the stars, which had been unseen all day in the sunlight, began to show up to good advantage in the darkened sky.

At dawn, Fleet Foot the doe and the spotted fawns stared, amazed, at the strange spectacle of a boy and a bear sleeping side by side, the Boy's head pillowed on the furry back of his pet.

Then their big eyes widened to an even stranger sight.

## CHAPTER XVI

### A FIGHT FOR A FRIEND

UNK WUNK, the porcupine, had come grunting hungrily about camp that night.

Smelling the bacon, (which he craved above all things), he had gone nosing into the open knap-sack after some, with the result that he had spilled the little red apples all over himself.

The tiny apples impaled themselves on his quills, and the sight that greeted the eyes of Fleet Foot,—and later of the boy and the bear,—was that of a big, black, pin-cushiony hump that gnawed the root of a tree, with little red apples apparently growing all down his back.

Well it was for both Twinkly Eyes and his boy friend that they could begin the day with laughter. Their troubles were not yet over,

—though just what brand of trouble would assail them next, they little dreamed.

They breakfasted, the boy on bread and bacon, the bear on a great cluster of honey mushrooms that he found growing on a decaying log.

By and by the Boy caught some fish, and both comrades felt like having another breakfast.

Both, being pioneer backwoods dwellers, were conscious of little pairs of eyes that peeped at them from trail and tree top. Now a grouse would rise before them with a thunderous roar of wings. Now a striped chipmunk would sit watching them immovably, or a gray squirrel would go scurrying through the brush with as much noise as a hound would make. Red squirrels scolded the intruders. Soft, white trimmed flying squirrels darted from tree-trunk to tree-trunk with pretty grace. Musk-rats darted busily about a pond they passed, making their mud tepees safe and snug for winter. A huge antlered deer swam Rapid River, his great eyes questioning the strange spectacle

of two such friends as the boy and the bear.

A bob-cat followed at a distance, perhaps merely curious, perhaps anxious to see them safely out of his home territory. And in the open spaces, a million crickets sang among the asters and golden rod. It was certainly getting to look like home to the little black bear, and his heart beat high with the hope that he might not have to go back as he had come.

He saw many wood rats he longed to chase. About the size of the barn rats at the Valley Farm, they had long, hairy tails and great, listening ears, and their fur was of that same reddish tinge that serves to camouflage so many of the furry folk against the red-brown soil,—from tiny Shirr Chipmunk to Fleet Foot, the doe.

Once the Boy was startled by a family of these rats leaping out from almost under his feet as he all but stepped on the nest of sticks and bark, in which they had been snoozing away the sun-lit hours till night should come and make it safe for them to venture forth.

He also glimpsed a white-footed deer

mouse, with alert big ears, and cheeks stuffed like a squirrel's with seeds or insects for his winter stores.

They had come to a rocky slope, and the Boy had heard a faint, kitten-like mewing from some hidden cavern. He really ought to have known better than to hunt for lynx kittens.—Any forest mother will defend her young, and how could Madame Wild-cat know that the Boy meant them no injury?—No, it was decidedly a rash thing to do. Twinkly Eyes knew it was rash, and he tried to tell the Boy, by holding back and tugging on his chain. He even sat down on his tail and refused to budge. But the Boy did not understand.

Suddenly there was a screech, as Madame Lynx flew at the Boy, claws out.

In that instant the little bear proved his friendship to the hand that fed him. He also showed what kind of loyalty a bear considers his friend's due. Before Madame Wild-cat could attack the Boy, Twinkly Eyes had launched himself upon her with a

swinging blow of his powerful fore-paw. That stopped her for a moment, only. Before the Boy could scramble out of reach, the giant cat, nostrils dilating with rage, flew screaming at the pair of them,—for the Boy still grasped the chain.

There was no time for a polite boxing-match, Twinkly Eyes decided. His eyes glowing red with rage, he closed with her, tooth and claw, ears laid back tight to his head to be out of harm's way if possible, his chesty growl vying with her caterwauling.

"Wa-ah!—Gr-r-r!" he snarled painfully, as the fur—both black and tawny—began to fly. A raking gash of the lynx's claws cut his side. But there was blood on his jaws, —her blood, not his.

Then Madame Lynx had had enough of it. With a hissing "uff!" she leapt to a tree top, where she glowered down on them, stub tail twitching wrathfully, eyes fairly shooting sparks, as her pupils dilated and contracted in her nervous tension.

The Boy was glad to note that she did not

seem much hurt. Nor was Twinkly Eyes,—though he had fallen to licking his wound. His fur was thick, and the lynx's claws had not gone so deep but that it would heal quickly.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE ESCAPE

THE little black bear had won!

Madame Lynx gave one last yowl, and retired into her cave. She was really more scared than hurt.

"Good work, old partner!" said the Boy. "You deserve your freedom, that's sure,—and I'm going to give it to you right this minute.—I've known all along that I ought to."

Twinkly didn't understand the words, but he did the tone, and the lump of maple sugar that the Boy held out to him.

Then with a snap his collar was off, and with it the hateful chain. "Good-bye, old scout," said the Boy. "I'd like to keep you, but I know you'd rather go."

The little bear was already sprinting away through the trees, leaping and dodging in

and out among them just like Old Man Red Fox. Because what if the Boy should change his mind? And it wasn't more than the wink of an eye before he was clear out of sight.

He had fought for his friend, and he had been given the freedom he longed for, and he simply couldn't wait a minute longer to inspect his range.

What had happened in his absence? How were all the wood folk that he had left so many moons before? Then it had been spring. The first blueberries were only just ripe on the hill-sides that sloped to the sun. Now it was blackberry season, and he had a pretty good idea where he was likely to end the day.

On through the good green woods he raced. Already the maples were turning red under the white-fleeced sky, and the scarlet seed pods of the over-grown jack-in-the-pulpits showed where he might expect to find the great, onion-shaped roots that he loved. Here was a clump of sumac in velvety crimson seed pods standing up like candle flames,

and there a thorny bush drooping with ripe barberries. Even the Solomon's seals were aflame with fruit. The time of the autumn's feast was at hand, and he could begin fattening up against the winter's sleep. But still he raced on, too happy to stop for food.

In the little wild meadows that he crossed, the soft purple of wild asters tinted the borders of the dried brook beds, just as the Indian summer haze tinted the farther hills. The crickets sang their invitations to lie down in the long brown grass and take a nap in the sunshine, but he could not stop for that. On, on he galloped on his noiseless feet.

At last he reached the rim of Lone Lake.

Mother Black Bear was not there, but the Ospreys were still diving hawk-like for fish, and Baldy the eagle was still circling around overhead trying to bully them into dropping their catch. Only this time there were three young Ospreys fishing too, and Mother Osprey flew about screaming warnings and instructions as Baldy came swooping down to

bully the one who had just made his catch.

"Just like old times," thought the little bear, his black eyes twinkling more than ever.

At sight of Twinkly Eyes, Baldy gave a scream of rage. "If he drops that fish, it's mine," he rasped harshly.

"It is, if you catch it before it hits the ground," rumbled Twinkly Eyes in the depths of his yearling chest. And he sat down to watch the fun.

Suddenly there was a movement on the shore, and cross old Mrs. Snapper, the giant turtle, came slowly lumbering up the bank.

"Hello, there," called Twinkly Eyes. "I declare, I'm so glad to be back, I'm glad to see every one I meet." (And he meant it.)

"Well, I'm not glad to see you, I can assure you," said Mrs. Snapper crossly. "And I don't believe many of the wood folk will be, either. We surely hoped something had happened to you."

"Oh, there, now, I expect I have as many friends as you have in these woods,"

laughed Twinkly Eyes. "Perhaps more. And most of them have a sense of humor. I am mostly a vegetarian, you know, and they tease me as often as I tease them. If I do chase some of them, like Shirr Chipmunk, or Madame Wood Hare, they know they can out-run me, and from the way Shirr always sits up and sauces me, I fancy he enjoys a race as much as I do."

"All right, but if you go chasing me, I'll bite your toes off,—that I will," hissed Mrs. Snapper.—She came a little nearer, snapping her jaws together warningly.

"You are courting trouble, if you try to bite," said Twinkly Eyes. "I don't believe in going out of my way to pick a quarrel, but I'm certainly not anxious to have my toes snapped off." He had come so near losing his paw in the trap that he knew just what it would feel like. "But I think I know what ails you, Mrs. Snapper. You need a chance to think it over,"—and the next thing the big snapping-turtle knew, he had slipped the long claws of his right fore-paw under the edge of her shell, just far

enough back to be out of reach of her jaws. Then he turned her over on her back, where all she could do was to kick out wildly with all four feet in her effort to turn right side up again. And there he left her, with a merry twinkle in his eye, to mend her manners.

Where, meantime, was Mother Black Bear? Twinkly sniffed at the stump at the cross trails, but found no message of her having passed that way. He peered into the cave on the slope of Beaver Brook, but it had not even been slept in for a long, long time. He studied the tracks on every trail that led down to Lone Lake, but the ground was hard and dry, and he learned nothing, with eyes or nose, that would tell her whereabouts.

Then he sat down to reason it out. Why, of course! Why had he not thought of that in the first place? This was blackberry season, and she would surely be feasting in some berry patch. There was that big one at the end of the Lake. The very place!—

No sooner was his mind made up than he

was off again, racing noiselessly on his furry feet. Then a sound made his ears prick forward. It was Chetwoof, the big bear of the neighboring range, and his voice was wrathful.—What right had he in Mother Black Bear's berry patch?

Then came the frightened squeal of one of the wee new cubs, and Twinkly Eyes redoubled his speed. He was needed in that berry patch!

## CHAPTER XVIII

### IN THE BERRY PATCH

NOW bears are like people in respecting the rights of others.

As a rule, each family of bears has its own range, and will not intrude on a neighbor's range. This range belonged to Mother Black Bear. But there are thieves among humans, and sometimes there are thieves among bears.

Chetwoof knew he had no right in Mother Black Bear's berry patch. But he knew, too, that she was alone, with two cubs to protect. Therefore he simply came over and helped himself.

That wasn't so bad. So long as there were berries enough for all, she wouldn't have minded, except for one thing. He wanted them all for himself. He was actually trying to drive her from her own home grounds.

Just now he stood in the middle of the finest clump of bushes, gobbling the ripe fruit in great handfuls, and the wee cubs were afraid to come near. He even growled at Mother Black Bear herself unless she kept her distance.

Had she been alone, she might have fought off the intruder. But so long as he did not actually hurt the cubs, she had no mind to risk a fight. For if she got hurt, what would become of her babies? (How she wished their father would come back! But he had already gone prospecting up Mount Olaf.)

In other words, Chetwoof was having things all his own way when Mother Black Bear's yearling cub arrived on the scene.

"How is this?" growled Twinkly Eyes. "You wouldn't let *me* pick blueberries on *your* range, and now you are trying to keep us off our own range."

"Young man," rumbled Chetwoof, "you are just about big enough to spank." And he advanced with paw up-raised ready to give him a cuff.

But Mother Black Bear was now re-inforced by her half-grown son, and she was in a far better position to drive the big bear away. With a roar of wrath she rose to her full height, teeth bared and paws raised for the boxing match that she meant should settle the matter. Twinkly also rose, with bared teeth,—and so did the wee cubs, though the little mimics stayed a good, safe distance behind their mother.

In another moment the three of them were at it. Chetwoof retreated, but Mother Black Bear still came on, Twinkly close beside her.—You never heard such a snarling and growling on the part of the two big bears, and such squealing and whining on the part of the two little bears, and such a combination of all these sounds as now issued from the middle sized bear!

Chetwoof watched for the moment when he might take Mother Black Bear off guard, and Mother Black Bear watched Chetwoof, first one paw, then the other, raised to deal the blow. Chetwoof got in a left-handed upper cut that made his opponent dizzy.

With a gasp of rage, she closed with him, neatly dodging his next thrust,—jumping back, then closing again,—always guarding her face with one arm while striking with the other.

(Later the two wee cubs gave an imitation boxing match, bristling and growling, and pretending to be terribly in earnest. But now they watched more than half scared out of their wits.)

But the end of it all was that Chetwoof was driven back to his own range for trying to hog theirs.

Then Mother Black Bear, with an affectionate rub of her cheek against Twinkly's furry jowl, began asking questions. "I knew you'd been caught in that trap," she said. "I found a bit of the fur off your paw. But when I smelled human foot-steps all around the place, I thought surely something dreadful had become of you."

"That's what I thought, too, at first," said Twinkly Eyes. "But here I am, back again, none the worse for the experience. And now I know how to appreciate my freedom."

And he shuddered as he thought of the traveling showman and the poor old dancing bear who had had such a wretched life of it.

Between mouthfuls he told Mother Black Bear all about it, while the wee cubs listened with ears pricked up their sharpest, the berries all but forgotten.

"Strange how humans differ," mused Mother Black Bear. "The Man that set the trap would have killed you, but the Boy was your friend, and the traveling showman had kept his bear a prisoner all these years on the end of a chain, and starved and abused him till he was ready to die.—Well, you'd better look out that he doesn't come trailing you here. Mercy! If he should try to capture my cubs! I'd tear him to pieces before I'd let him take them." And she began turning her head uneasily from side to side as she tested the breeze. "Just let him hurt my cubs!" she growled.

"Well, he's not going to capture *me,* I can tell you that!" declared Twinkly Eyes. For even kind treatment and good things to eat, and the jokes he had managed to play,

had not made him happy at Valley Farm.

Then one evening found him padding softly down to Pollywog Pond for a meal of the wild grapes that grew on the hill-side just back of Pollywog Pond.

It was a dark, cloudy night, and he felt safer than if there had been a moon. Presently his ears pricked to a strange sound. The Boy was playing his harmonica again. Twinkly rose to his haunches, fore-paws raised in a way he had, his head held sidewise while he listened. Memories of the fun and feasting at Valley Farm flitted like a dream through his furry head.

Then came the memory of the clanking chain, and the cage-like repentance box, and the traveling showman.—Like one who struggles out of a nightmare, he dashed away to make sure he really had his freedom.

Still, on many a moonlight night, Whoo-Whoo, the owl, blinked his round eyes at a little black bear who sat on the hill-top, listening to the far, faint strains of music from the Boy's harmonica.

THE END

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